QUESTROYAL FINE ART, LLC

Important American Paintings

903 Park Avenue (at 79th Street), Suite 3A & B, New York, NY 10075 T: (212) 744-3586 F: (212) 585-3828

HOURS: Monday–Friday 10–6, Saturday 10–5 and by appointment

EMAIL: gallery@questroyalfineart.com www.questroyalfineart.com

MYTH AND REALITY

Elihu Vedder and American Painters in Italy

QUESTROYAL FINE ART, LLC

COVER

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

1 *The Orient,* 1889
Oil on canvas
12 1/2 x 20 3/16 inches
Signed and dated lower right: *Elihu Vedder / 1889*

BACK COVER

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

2 *Vesuvius*
Oil on paper laid down on canvas
5 13/16 x 10 3/16 inches
Initialed lower left: *V.*; titled and signed on verso: *VESUVIUS / by Elihu Vedder*

ABOVE

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

3 *Figures by a Wall in Moonlight*
Oil on panel
6 9/16 x 11 9/16 inches
Signed lower right: *Elihu Vedder*

May 10 – May 31, 2012

MYTH AND REALITY

Elihu Vedder and American Painters in Italy

Louis M. Salerno, Owner

Brent L. Salerno, Co-Owner

Chloe Heins, Director

Angela M. Scerbo, Administrator

Nina LiGreci, Gallery Coordinator

Nina Sangimino, Research Associate

Rita J. Walker, Controller

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Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

4 *The Gloomy Path*, 1865
Oil on board
10 x 6 3/16 inches
Initialed and dated lower left: *18V65*;
titled, signed, and dated on verso:
The Gloomy Path / E. Vedder / 1865

A Non-Fatal Attraction

One afternoon, Simon Parkes summoned me to his lair on the west side of Manhattan. In this nearly sacred place, where he perfected his rising talent as a painter, he spoke of a proposition that he believed I would find intriguing.

I entered a grand space that was oddly familiar—almost as if it were re-created from my imagination's conception of an eccentric artist's studio. The indefatigable Mr. Parkes retrieved paintings from racks that encircled the entire room, and I was treated to a private showing of the works he deeply admired and had collected over the course of his lifetime. The paintings were by Elihu Vedder, and most were executed in Italy. They were curious paintings, but I was not overly impressed, and so I hesitated when Simon proposed an exhibition. Simon is someone I respect both as a conservator and as a person with an admirable, holistic understanding of art. If Vedder's works compelled him to collect them almost exclusively over the span of decades, then I felt I must come to understand what could inspire such passion. I asked for all of the canvases, about fifty, to be sent to my gallery.

Eight of my choices were hung in one of our showrooms. These intriguing paintings did not aspire to the grandeur of Bierstadt or to the atmospheric command of Gifford. They were dead honest: quintessential expressions of place, whether the Italian countryside or a village, at dawn, dusk, or in between. Vedder felt no need to exaggerate or to resort to artistic device. His perfect compositions expose the essence of a scene and are brilliant because they possess undeniable integrity. This sort of expression is an achievement on par with those of other great American masters, but perhaps it is a bit more difficult to recognize; however, once Vedder's visual language is understood, it evokes sensations not unlike those felt in the presence of a haunting Blakelock or an ethereal Inness. Vedder's work is not a symphony but rather a melody that the mind gradually absorbs and recalls later to impart a sense of well-being—a purpose that is as enviable as any other emotional response that paintings by other greats may provoke.

I thank Simon for introducing me to an artist whose work now resounds in my mind. I invite you to experience Italy through the art of Elihu Vedder, his influences, and other great American painters.

LOUIS M. SALERNO, *Owner*

Elihu Vedder and American Painters in Italy

With its storied history, picturesque landscapes, and colorful inhabitants, Italy has long captured the attentions and imaginations of American artists.[1] Since 1760, when Benjamin West became the first American artist to visit this ancient land, Italy has played host to myriad American painters and sculptors. As the nineteenth-century art historian Henry Tuckerman wrote, "A visit to Italy is perhaps more of an epoch in the life of an American artist than in that of any other. The contrast between the new and old civilization, the diversity in modes of life, and especially the more kindling associations which the enchantment of distance and long anticipation occasion, make his sojourn there an episode in life."[2] The duration of this "episode" varied greatly from artist to artist. Some were casual "Grand Tourists," taking in only the prescribed landmarks of Italy en route to other destinations, while others—for whom a brief sojourn must have seemed woefully inadequate—stayed for years at a time. A third, much smaller group of artists—including John Gadsby Chapman, William Stanley Haseltine (no. 22), and Charles Caryl Coleman (no. 5)—made their homes in Italy for decades, if not permanently.[3] Elihu Vedder (1836–1923) can be counted among this third category of expatriate artists, for whom Italy was far more than a temporary stop or a fleeting interest.

Vedder first visited Italy in 1857, at the age of twenty-one. The young artist saw Rome and Venice but made his long-term home in Florence, where he resided until 1860, when he returned to the United States. From Florence, Vedder made many sketching trips, including visits to Pisa, Lucca, San Gimignano, Volterra, and Siena. On these excursions, Vedder was often accompanied by Giovanni Costa (no. 25), a painter associated with the Macchiaioli, a group of Italian artists committed to the development of plein-air painting. Costa influenced Vedder's ability to cull subjects from the surrounding landscape, and the artist's devotion to direct observation prompted Vedder to remark, "I don't think he [Costa] saw more Nature than I did; but he saw more in Nature to paint than I did."[4] He also wrote that Costa "delighted in stealing upon Nature in her most intimate moods—taking her by *tradimento* [surprise]."[5]

This first taste of Italy provided an artistic wellspring for Vedder, who later wryly recalled this period, writing, "at that time so much Art burst into my unprepared mind that the resulting confusion has lasted me for the rest of my life…."[6] Although Vedder remained in the United States through the Civil War, Italy provided a constant inspiration for his work. For example, in 1865, he painted *The Gloomy Path* (no. 4), which depicts a faceless Benedictine monk (identifiable by his black habit) walking through a lonely landscape that resembles the dry and desolate hills of the Crete Senesi, a region of Tuscany southeast of Siena.[7] Vedder returned to Italy in 1866, this time settling in Rome, where he lived until his death in 1923. Throughout his long career, Vedder never ceased to indulge his penchant for variety, and his considerable oeuvre comprises religious pictures (no. 8), allegorical figures (no. 1), vignettes of the everyday (no. 26), and even intricate still lifes (nos. 34 and 35), among many other subjects.[8] Although Vedder's eclectic interests could not be confined to one genre, the Italian landscape never ceased to captivate him, providing constant inspiration for pictures ranging from the documentary to the romantic. *Vesuvius* (no. 2), for example, presents a beautifully rendered but straightforward view of the volcano from across the Bay of Naples. The artist's *Mt. Colognola, near Perugia* (no. 14), on the other hand, is more about sentiment than locale, depicting an anonymous figure walking a rocky path amid an uninviting landscape littered with ruins.

Another longtime American resident of Italy was William Stanley Haseltine (1835–1900). A student of Germany's Düsseldorf Academy, Haseltine first traveled to Italy in 1856, with fellow artists Emanuel Leutze, T. Worthington Whittredge, and Albert Bierstadt. Haseltine spent two years in Rome before returning to the United States in 1858. As with Vedder, the lure of Italy proved too strong for the artist to resist, and by 1869, Haseltine was back in Rome, where he and his family made their home in a sixteenth-century villa on the Piazza del Gesù. From his base in Rome, Haseltine spent the next two decades traveling and painting throughout Italy and the rest of Europe. Just as his friend Albert Bierstadt applied Düsseldorf aesthetic conventions to the American West, so too did Haseltine bring his academic training to bear upon Italy, painting exquisitely detailed pictures bathed in dramatic light, exemplified by the *Coast of Sori* (no. 22). Such paintings—fusing Italy's unique scenery with artistic invention—underscore the natural sublimity of the Italian landscape that provided, for so many American artists, a source of enduring inspiration.

GRAHAM C. BOETTCHER, PHD
The William Cary Hulsey Curator of American Art
Birmingham Museum of Art

1 A thorough discussion of the American artistic presence in Italy can be found in the groundbreaking 1992 exhibition catalogue *The Lure of Italy: American Artists and The Italian Experience, 1760–1914* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). This brief essay is indebted to that publication's author, Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., and to its contributors for their important work on the subject.

2 Henry T. Tuckerman, *Artist-Life: or, Sketches of American Painters,* 2nd ed. (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1849), 49.

3 While Haseltine and Coleman died abroad, declining health and financial distress forced Chapman to return to the United States in 1884, after nearly three and a half decades in Italy.

4 Elihu Vedder, *The Digressions of V.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910), 373–74.

5 Ibid., 374. While *tradimento* translates to "betrayal" or "treason," the expression here is "*a tradimento,*" which means "by surprise."

6 Ibid., 139.

7 The barren landscape of the Crete Senesi is often described as "lunar." It is home to the Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, a Benedictine monastery.

8 For more on Vedder's varied body of work, see the exhibition catalogue *Perceptions and Evocations: The Art of Elihu Vedder* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979).

Charles Caryl Coleman (1840–1928)

5 *Outside the Walls,* 1868

Oil on paper laid down on canvas

6 1/2 x 13 7/8 inches

Monogrammed, inscribed, and dated lower right: *CCC ROMA / 1868.*;
titled and dated on verso: *Outside the Walls / Roma 68*

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

6 *Girl with a Distaff,* ca. 1871

Oil on canvas

11 7/8 x 6 11/16 inches

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

7 *Roman Woman,* 1872
Oil on paper
8 1/2 x 8 7/16 inches
Initialed and dated lower left: *18V72*; signed, inscribed, and dated on verso: *Elihu Vedder / Rome 1872*

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

8 *Return from Calvary,* ca. 1867
Oil on canvas
13 3/4 x 19 13/16 inches

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

9 *St. George and the Dragon*, 1866
Oil on canvas
7 9/16 x 9 5/8 inches
Dated and signed on verso:
Paris Feb. 1866 / Elihu Vedder

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

10 *A Little Knowledge Is a Dangerous Thing*, before 1880
Oil on panel
5 3/8 x 13 3/8 inches
Signed on verso: *"Vedder"*

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

11 *Leaning Trees near Viareggio*, ca. 1880–83
Oil on canvas laid down on masonite
17 7/16 x 10 9/16 inches
Signed lower right: *Vedder*; titled and signed on verso: *"LEANING TREES / NEAR VIAREGGIO" / by / Elihu Vedder*

Thomas Hiram Hotchkiss (ca. 1834–1869)

12 *Gubbio, Perugia,* 1867

Oil on board

10 7/8 x 7 1/4 inches

Dated lower left: *Sep 2 / 67*; inscribed and dated on verso: *Sketch by Hotchkiss / Given To / E: Vedder / Sep. 67 – / bern Perugia & Gubbio*

William Stanley Haseltine (1835–1900)

13 *Rocky Coast,* ca. 1858

Oil on paper laid down on canvas

14 1/8 x 19 3/8 inches

Inscribed on verso: *Sept 1902 / Property of / Herbert C. Haseltine / 20*[illeg.] */ Porto XVI / width 18 1/8 x 12 1/2 in. / Early work. 58 / Painted by Wm S. Haseltine – 1835 – 1900.. / H.H. Ploude / Coast Bay of Naples / (probably Sorrento)*

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

14 *Mt. Colognola, near Perugia,* 1877

Oil on paper laid down on canvas

6 1/4 x 10 5/8 inches

Dated lower right: *Aug 8–77*; titled and signed on verso: *monte colognola*[sic] */ near Perugia / Vedder*

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

15 *The Thermae of Caracalla,* 1857

Gouache and pencil on paper

3 1/16 x 7 9/16 inches (sight size)

Titled, dated, and initialed on verse: *The Thermae of Carracalla.*[sic] / *1857* / *V.*

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

16 *Ruins at Porto d'Anzio,* ca. 1870

Oil on canvas

7 3/4 x 12 5/8 inches

Titled and signed lower left: *Ruins at Porto d'Anzio – Elihu Vedder*; inscribed, signed, and dated on verso: *Ruins at Porto d'Anzio – Where the Statue of the so called / "Fanculla d'Anzio" was found, / sex still unacertained*[sic] *– / Down there with G. Costa – long ago – / painted 'ditto' / Elihu Vedder / 1911*

Robert Scott Duncanson (1821–1872)

17 *The Apennines, Italy,* 1867

Oil on canvas

10 1/8 x 16 3/16 inches

Signed and dated lower left: *Duncanson / 1867.*; titled, signed, and dated on verso: *The Appenines.*[sic] / *ITALY.* / *_Duncanson.* / *1867.*

Eugene Benson (1839–1908)

18 *Carrara Peaks*, 1881

Oil on panel

7 7/8 x 24 1/16 inches

Signed and dated lower right: *E Benson – / 1881*; inscribed on verso: *Carrara Peaks – / a study – / painted by / Eugene Benson – / 1881 –*

George Heming Mason (1818–1872)

19 *Study in the Campagna*

Oil on canvas laid down on board

3 1/4 x 9 1/4 inches

Eugene Benson (1839–1908)

20 *September Afternoon on the Lagoon,* 1883
Oil on panel
7 5/8 x 23 5/8 inches
Monogrammed and dated lower right: *EB / '83*; titled, signed, and dated on verso: *September Afternoon on the / LAGOON : VE*[NICE] */ by Eugene Benson / 1882*

Samuel Colman (1832–1920)

21 *Capri,* ca. 1871–75
Oil on canvas
9 1/8 x 15 1/8 inches
Signed lower right: *S. Colman.*

William Stanley Haseltine (1835–1900)

22 *Coast of Sori,* 1893
Oil on canvas
25 3/16 x 45 5/16 inches
Signed and dated lower right: *W. S. Haseltine '93*

Walter Launt Palmer (1854–1932)

23 *Opal Domes*, ca. 1908
Oil on canvas
32 1/8 x 24 1/8 inches
Signed lower left: *.W.L. PALMER*

John Henry Twachtman (1853–1902)

24 *Venice*, 1878
Oil on canvas laid down on board
6 3/4 x 12 7/8 inches
Signed, titled, and dated lower left: *J. H. Twachtman / Venice 78.*

Giovanni Costa (1826–1903)

25 *Barca sulla Spiaggia (Boat on the Beach)*, 1855

Oil on panel

4 15/16 x 14 5/8 inches

Signed, inscribed, and dated on verso: *Giovanni Costa* / *No 10 stud dal vero 1855 Verso Ardea*

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

26 *Men at Boat Dock*

Oil on canvas

7 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches

Inscribed and signed lower left: *Porto d'anzio* / *Vedder*

Vincenzo Cabianca (1827–1902)

27 *Canal Scene*

Oil on canvas

27 5/8 x 17 13/16 inches

Signed lower right: *Cabianca*

Hamilton Gibbs Wilde (1827–1884)

28 *Palazzo Bemba,* 1862

Oil on canvas

12 1/16 x 14 1/2 inches

Initialed lower right: *HW.*; inscribed, signed, and dated on verso: *Ca*[illeg.] *del Palazzo Bemba / Venezia H. Wilde / 1862*

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

29 *Venetian Procession,* ca. 1883–84

Oil on panel laid down on board

8 9/16 x 5 5/16 inches

Signed, titled, and dated on verso: *sketch by / Elihu Vedder – of a / "Venician*[sic] *Procession" / about / 1883–4*

Russell Smith (1812–1896)

30 *Italian Window*

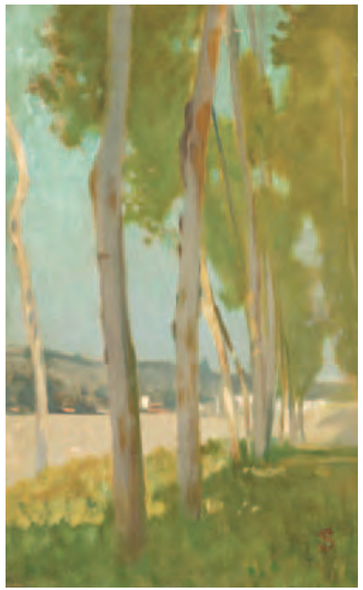
Oil on panel and wood molding

14 15/16 x 10 1/2 inches

Initialed lower left: *RS.*

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

31 *Rolling Hills,* 1867
Oil on board
11 15/16 x 15 3/8 inches
Dated and signed lower right: *July/67 / Vedder*



Telemaco Signorini (1835–1901)

32 *Strada Alberata (Tree-Lined Road)*
Oil on paper laid down on canvas
10 13/16 x 6 13/16 inches
Monogrammed lower right: *TS*;
inscribed on verso: *S.C.*

George Inness (1825–1894)

33 *Monte Lucia, Perugia,* 1873
Oil on canvas
13 7/8 x 19 3/4 inches
Signed lower right: *G. Inness*; inscribed on verso label:
1873 / No. / 161 / 13 3/4 x 19 1/2 Monte Lucia, Perugia / Italy

Additional Works in the Exhibition

PLEASE CONTACT US
TO REQUEST AN IMAGE

Colman, Samuel
View of a Town, 1862

Fattori, Giovanni
L'Arno all'Indiano

Vedder, Elihu
Between Perugia and Gubbio, 1867
Campagna Romana, ca. 1870
Hermit in the Desert
Man in Profile
Man Working on a Cliffside, 1890
Near Perugia, 1867
Off Pier Head, Viareggio, Italy, 1881–86
Old Tree on the Way to Tel el-Amarna, ca. 1889–90
Robed Figure
The Poet Bears the Sorrows of the World
Twilight
Viareggio, ca. 1880
Woman's Head

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

LEFT

34 *Wildflowers and Greek Vases,* 1880
Oil on board laid down on panel
16 3/4 x 3 7/16 inches
Initialed lower center: *V.*; inscribed on verso: *Elihu Vedder fecit. / verso 1880 –*

RIGHT

35 *Wildflowers and Greek Vases,* 1880
Oil on board laid down on panel
16 13/16 x 3 7/16 inches
Initialed lower center: *V.*; inscribed on verso: *Elihu Vedder fecit. 1880?*

DESIGN: Malcolm Grear Designers PRINTING: Meridian Printing PHOTOGRAPHY: Timothy Pyle, Light Blue Studio EDITING: Amanda Sparrow

Elihu Vedder (1836–1923)

36 *Seated Girl with a Red Curtain*
Oil on canvas
9 1/16 x 8 5/16 inches
Signed lower left: *Vedder.*